The Island Landfall

Tahiti is a spot on the map and man a pretty
good Almighty. He is a little thing, with a soul
for the winds and the seas to sing to and a
body that wants the smell of roasting fish and
a bright red fire. But he is not a slave either,
crawling out by the 8.15 and back by the 5.20
and keeping an infinitesimal portion of some great
affair's accounts at its good will and pleasure.
He is a man, and can get into his own canoe and
spear his own fish and brave the gods and claim his
catch by the might of his own right arm. And it's
good, I thought, to be brown and bare and . . .
The look-out man sung out suddenly and the
helmsman brought her round. A stone's throw on
either side the hungry waves raced at and foamed
upon the reef. An outrigger in the very passage
rocked dizzily at our passing. The schooner
ceased to pitch ; the lights shone steadily. One

could make out coco-nuts. And as I stood and stretched I saw that the dark night was flooding with new light. I caught a stay as we swung to our anchorage, and watched the radiance steal among the dark tree-masses on the shore ; and I knew as I looked that the Tahitians relate but